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HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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HINDERING CHRISTIANITY.

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."—**GAL. V., 22-26.**

From this passage I mean to ask and to answer the question, this morning, why it is that Christianity has made comparatively so little progress in this world. It is a question worthy of our consideration.

What was the power that Jesus himself manifested? And first, what was the secret of it? He belonged to the Jews, the most abhorred nation of antiquity. He never separated himself from the manners and customs of his people. He worshiped in their synagogues and in their temple just as they did. He never wrote a line nor a word, of theology or philosophy. He never was ordained. He never took upon himself any official relation to mankind, any more than to his own people. There is not a single thing in all his speech, as recorded by his disciples, that looks like organizing men. There is not in the thought or conception of man anything so absurd as the contrast between the teaching of Christ in respect to Christian life, and the enormous and pompous organization of Christian churches which pretend to have derived their authority and their forms from him. The question, therefore, is one of very profound importance: What is the secret of the power of this Personage, who ap-

peared so many hundred years ago, who was not the master of a system, who did not organize a party, or a sect, or a school, and who wrote nothing?

It was the simple power of a higher type of manhood than had ever been known in the world before. It was Divine manhood. It carried with it, also, by inference, the deduction that there was more power in the simple disclosure of a divine life than in any other source whatsoever. The manifestation of meekness, and gentleness, and sympathy, and patience, and self-denial, and truthfulness, and lovableness, and lovingness, and such manliness as lifts the personal character of the Lord Jesus Christ above all that ever lived on the face of the earth, and the simple exhibition in his life and teachings, as they were recorded by others, of the truly Divine disposition—these have been the secret of moral power, from that day to this. It was a new type and a higher type of a personal manhood.

And that is not all. From this new and higher type of manhood, symmetrized and disclosed in him, is derived, or is derivable, a higher conception of God's character, since the only glass through which we can get a true view of God is the glass of human experience. Outside of possible human experience there is no such thing as knowing God in his moral attributes or dispositions. Whatever, therefore, exalts any single trait in human life to an excellence which it had not before makes it a lens through which new revelations of the divinity come to us; and where all the qualities which belong to human nature are exalted in this way, where they are combined in symmetry, and where they harmoniously present a magnificent character such as the world never dreamed of nor thought possible, through that comes a mightier revelation of the true inward nature of God—and of his personal dispositions.

These two sources of power stand together in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was the goodness of God manifested in him by his personal character and life that constituted or raised up that moral influence which has existed in spite of revolutions, which has uplifted nations, which has been stronger than the sword, which has been more powerful than the

temptations and lures of pleasure and money, which has exalted the race, and which is still exalting it.

Where, however, to-day, is the real force of Christianity in the world? It is in the living power of those men who have accepted this Christ-like life, and who are living as Christ lived. The force of Christianity is not in the cathedral, nor in the temple, nor in the synagogue, nor in the church, nor in organizations, nor in denominations: it lies in the sum of men's individual excellences.

I do not deny nor undervalue the various instruments which the Christian life employs. I would not be understood as setting aside the church, nor those various associations which cluster around about it; but I regard all these as simple machinery. They create nothing. Their function is to *express* that which can be developed only as a living force from the human heart. They have been made largely to take the place of personal spontaneous power. Individuals have been absorbed to make corporations; and the great gospel idea of divine individuality in men has almost been lost sight of through many ages. It is again in our day developing in power; but there yet remains in all Christian denominations and organizations a tendency, springing from the physical inclinations of men, to build Christianity by the outside, to make the kingdom of God on earth to be in the aggregate organizations of Christianity, and not within the individual man. The church is but a body; the living dispositions of men are the soul. A church in which love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, scarcely exist is a church without power, no matter how many are its members, how advanced its intelligence, how wide its sphere of practical labor, its charities and sensuous reformations; for without love these all are but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. I admit that organized churches have been made instrumental of great good from time to time in ages past; and yet, organized Christianity has been the poorest part of Christianity in this world. If there had been no other power in the world than that which has been exerted by organized churches, religion would have stunk long ago. It has not been the church that has

preserved religion : it has been religion that has preserved the church. It has not been the priesthood that have saved the laity or the people : it has been the humble and Christ-like lives of obscure persons among the laity that have saved the priesthood. As in the case of Christ the power lay, not in any outward organization, not in any systematic presentation of doctrine, but in the living force of a holy nature, so the power of Christianity has been in the development of its sweet qualities in so many private persons, and not in mere church organizations.

For, national churches and hierachal churches have given to the world vast corporeities with feeble spiritual life. Churches have been like caves. In limestone realms, there are vast caves where everything is quiet, as people want them to be in the church ; where the temperature never varies much from 40°, as people do not want it to vary in the church ; where everything is formulated, as people want things to be formulated in the church ; where from the roof there is the white stalactite, root up, always growing down ; and where at the bottom is the stalagmite, growing up, by petrifaction. Into one of these caves comes a man with a torch, who walks through ; and instantly all that there is in the cave becomes bright and beautiful. In what ? In itself ? No ; in the light of that man's torch.

And there are churches running down through the ages, with their Cardinals, and Archbishops, and Bishops ; with their different orders of priesthood ; with their eminent men ; with their saints. Great cavernous bodies they are, full of all manner of things dripping from the roof, and springing from the ground, hard and white as limestone stalactites and stalagmites ; and now and then one holy woman or one great-souled man throws light over them all, and makes them resplendent. They are rendered romantic, attractive, beautiful, by some individual, or some collection of individuals, who have been giving forth the light of a true Christian disposition.

Why, then, has Christianity made, comparatively, so little advance in the world ? After nearly two thousand years, what is the condition of Africa ? What is the condition of Asia ? What is the condition of the continent of North and South

America? What is the condition even of Christendom? Look over the world, and take in a general view of the conditions of nations, after two thousand years of Christianity, and where are they to-day? There has been a great deal done; but compared with what was to be done, how very little has been accomplished; and how very slow has been its accomplishment! Why has it been so slow?

We must bear in mind that the development of Christianity is not simply the diffusion of a knowledge of its history, nor of its organizations, nor of its ordinances, worship, or ecclesiastical polity. These are mere implements. The spread of Christianity can mean nothing else than the development of the fruits of the spirit in the human soul. It is the lifting of mankind into the higher realm of moral experiences. It is the generation of spiritual forces in individual souls.

We are to look, therefore, for the spread of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Where these exist in supreme power, there is Christianity. Where these are wanting, though all the pomp of ceremonial and of stringent ecclesiastical organization be present, there is but the outward form, and not the substance of Christianity. So that, in discussing the progress of Christianity, it must be borne in mind that we mean the development and power of these Christian graces in the human soul. How far have they become dominant in the world? Why have they been so slow in development, and of such limited scope, and almost unrecognized value?

Well, first, they who have set forward Christianity in this world adopted a coercive conscience, and assumed authority over men in God's name, attempting in religion what was attempted in politics—namely, the government of men without their consent, and according to a rule. We have now learned that freedom is the safest in the state, and that despotism, however handy it may be, makes poor men. It may make easy government, but it makes inferior citizens. Liberty, on the other hand, however many leaks it may have, and however many storms there may be in it, after all, in the long run, makes strong citizens and multiplies the resources and increases the strength of the state.

Now, liberty is just as necessary in the church as it is in the state and in civil affairs. No man, because he is ordained to preach, has any authority over anybody. No church has any right to usurp authority over men's consciences and judgments. A church that does this in the name of God is just as monstrous and detestable as any government upon earth that usurps absolute authority over its subjects. If religion is to be anything, it is to be spontaneous ; it is to be the free offering of free souls. The moment you permit the church to say, "We have the light ; our conscience being instructed is lord of your conscience," you interfere with men's religious freedom. It is thought to be a very grave offense when an individual man says to another, "You be damned ;" but put a black robe on a man, put a split cap on his head, and put a long staff with a quirl on the end of it in his hand, and let him say, "Believe in transubstantiation or be damned," and it is thought entirely correct. Now, I do not think cursing under such circumstances is any better than when a private man uses it in his own affairs. In either case, it is vulgar, and to be disallowed—and all the more as you go up ; for an official curse is a great deal worse than a personal one.

You cannot develop the fruits of the Spirit,—love, joy, peace,—by coercive influences. I should like to see anybody go now with cannon and sword to my side-hill at Peekskill, where I have a good deal of grass which is reluctant to come up, and make it grow. I should like to see a fire-engine pump it up. I should like to see a magistrate with a search-warrant bring it up. Nobody can make it grow. It must grow itself if it grows at all. All that can be done is to make the temperature more favorable ; and that comes with the revolving sun. When the atmosphere is warm, then it will grow. You may help it ; you may nourish it ; by collateral influences you may facilitate its growth, but you have no power to make it grow independent of the warmth of the sun. No man can go with a crowbar, and put it under a tree, and say, "Grow !" and make it obey. It will not grow because you command it to. Nobody can say to a tree, "Blossom !" and be obeyed. It will not blossom because you tell it to.

And if you cannot exercise authority over these physical qualities, or attributes, or elements, how much less can you exercise authority over the quality of love ! Can you cause love to spring forth at your will ? Can you go to another, and say, “ Love me ! ” and secure obedience to that imperious command ? No, not any more than you can be lovely and avoid being loved. If you say to a person, “ Be joyful ! ” will he be joyful because you have commanded him to be so ? When men are bent down with sorrow like willows ; when they are clothed with tears, as after rains trees are, so that every motion shakes them down, can they obey your command to be joyful ? Can you go forth and say to men, “ Have peace ! ” and make them peaceful ? There was a Voice once that could hush the storms ; but has man that power ? Can man say to the stormy heart in the anguish of bereavement or fear or remorse, “ Peace, be still,” and be obeyed ?

The qualities to be developed in the world are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance ; and how are you to develop them ? Not by arrogance of conscience. There must be spontaneity or there will be nothing. All arrogation, therefore, of authority over men is a wicked assumption, not derivable from the Word of God, and in its experience constantly showing itself to be of the earth, earthy. “ To his own Master every man stands or falls,” says the apostle. “ Every man shall give account of *himself* to God. Who art thou, then, that judgest another man’s servant ? ” Take care of your own individual excellence, but never attempt to lay the law of your conscience authoritatively upon men, either in your individual capacity, or in your associated or official relations.

This going forth of Christianity, not as a sweet, wooing influence, shining on men like the sun of a May morning, but armed as a warrior, marching to the music of the fife and the beat of the drum, and “ breathing out threatenings and slaughter,” is not going to spread the graces of the Spirit. Its effect is rather to tread them under foot. Any apparent spread of Christianity under such circumstances is nominal and superficial—not real and vital. We have had an immense diffusion of Christianity ; and it has been like

gold-leaf, spread thin ; and it has grown thinner and thinner. What we need more than anything else, to-day, is vertical Christianity, which goes deeper, and takes hold more profoundly of affection, as a master-quality in each individual soul.

Secondly, the introduction of the malign element as a moral force, by which it has been attempted to extend Christianity, has been another capital offense and another reason why so little progress has been made in spreading the Gospel. When Paul in a reminiscence of his labor among the Corinthians gives some account of himself, he speaks as if he had paused on going into Corinth. Naturally he must have done so; he must have said to himself, “Here am I, a wandering Jew, going to the most dissolute, the richest and the most elegant city of Greece; a city world-renowned for pleasure; a city full of sophists, full of philosophers; full of men of science and literature; and now, how shall I start this new religion there?” “Well, I determined,” said he, “not to know anything among you as a source of moral power except Christ,—and Him crucified. I determined to disclose to you a moral phenomenon—namely, that the innate disposition of God is manifested in this: that he sent down into the world his Son, who took upon himself the human form, and subjected himself to human law, and was willing to suffer, and to suffer in the lowest and most ignominious way, for the sake of giving his life a ransom for many. I determined to rely, for the secret of my power, upon this fact and the moral qualities which grow out of it, as naturally related to human sensibility.”

Now, in the propagation of Christianity in the world since Paul’s day, has that been continued as the secret of power? Of course, in many cases, largely it has been; but go back and read of the actions of the church. Follow the line of controversial theology. I knew a young man in Amherst College, when I was a student there, who read Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History. When he began he thought he was a Christian, but when he got through he was an infidel. There were in the history of the church, as it came down step by step, such monstrous discords, such bitter quarrels, such

dreadful conflicts, such outrageous cruelties, such evils, hideous, heinous, and immeasurable, that he did not believe there was any divine beneficent providence in it. He felt that if there was any such providence, it would certainly be one that would watch over a church instituted of God and bearing the name of Christ.

If you examine the efforts that have been made to spread, to define, to defend and to exalt Christianity, you shall find that they have been largely directed to the construction of outward organizations, to the elucidation of dogmatic creeds, and to the establishment of spiritual despots. If the kingdom of God on earth is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, how can these be spread and intensified by the reason acting under the influence of selfishness, of pride, of vanity, and still less of fierce rivalries, suspicions and bitter hatreds? For the sake of religion, for the sake of the church, for the honor of God among men, it has been thought excusable for zeal to become a fire. Men have advocated and propagated an external Christianity by the sacrifice of every one of its internal attributes. The church for ages has been its tomb. The spirit of Christ has been obliged to wander up and down in a desert place, like the worthies recounted in the eleventh of Hebrews. And although in every age since the ascension of our Saviour, and in every church, there have been found sweet and glorious natures that kept alive in the memory of the world the true nature of Christianity, many heroic tasks, many saintly endurances, yet it is undeniable that the Christianity of whole ages has been impelled by the malign forces of human nature; and that neither in the realm of Mammon, nor in the strife of camps, nor in the fevers of political ambition, have there been more carnal, self-seeking, arrogant and despicable influences, than have been found in the propagation of Christianity.

Now, how can you develop love by hatred? How can you develop peace by controversy? The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, etc.; and how can you develop these by quarreling, misrepresentation, and annoying and vexatious criticism? The

gates of hell have often opened into this world out of ecclesiastical judicatories. Under the name of Christianity missionaries have been sent to the heathen, among whom were known no such abominable cruelties as were practised by those who sent them ; and we have not yet got over the tendency which has so long existed, to enforce Christianity by malign processes. There is still an attempt to introduce into theology those fiery animal passions which come lurid from the lower realms. And this whole Roman, Tuscan disposition to fill Christianity with monarchic and basilar elements has been fatal, as overthrowing Christianity in its very type and genius. Christianity began by the disclosure to the world of peace and good will to men ; have the persecutions, and torments, and exclusions, and wanderings of Christian men in the woods and in the deserts, and their hidings in caves, and their sorrows of soul, been the fit following of such a prelude ? Has he who came on earth to die, and to tell men that God was such an one that he would not willingly let men perish, been properly preached, when Jehovah has been represented as a hideous, bloody-mouthed being who makes men to devour them ? The iron doctrines of sects ; the machines of faith and practice into which men have been thrown, and by which they have been ground to powder, in order to make the church greater than its members, and more important than the souls of mankind ; and the ambitions, the hatreds, the fears, the passions that are engendered in vast ecclesiastical organizations—are these the instruments by which to introduce the kingdom of joy and love and peace ? 'Do you wonder that the Gospel has not spread more, under such circumstances ?

Suppose I were to say, The spirit of the garden is roses and mignonette and violets ; and suppose, straightway, I should go among the northern icebergs, during the fiercest months of the year, and attempt to plant these flowers amidst frost and ice and snow, and should wonder why it was that roses, and mignonette, and violets, and all manner of flowers did not seem to thrive there ? But tell me how they can thrive under such circumstances, where there is a frost that hates, that pierces, that eats up and devours ? And suppose

I should make some little temporary structure over them in which every particle of heat was absorbed by the cold, would it be a marvel that they did not grow? And is it any greater marvel that Christianity has not grown more in the organizations which have been built over it? Why, the church dominant in the world has for whole ages been simply monstrous. There have been no excesses more criticisable, and no terrors more abominable, than have existed under the auspices of the church. If you take Christianity comprehensively, it has not been made known to the world as a personal moral quality. When Christianity is spoken of to men, that which they think of is the Church; it is the Book; it is the Ministry; it is the Organization; and these, through long periods, have been made use of by men frequently under the influence not only of carnal but of infernal passions; so that under the name of Christianity the kingdom of the devil has been propagated through the world; and from iron scepters has come corroding rust. Joy, peace, love, longsuffering, meekness, and gentleness—these have not been the fruits that have been spread, nor the seeds that have been planted, for the most part, by what are called Christian organizations.

Thirdly, the progress of Christianity has been delayed or prevented because it has aimed at knowledge and not charity. Paul says, "Knowledge puffeth up; charity edifieth." By "charity" of course he means that benign, central spirit of love which is mother and nurse to every other good quality in the soul. The exact meaning does not appear in our translation, because "puffeth up" calls attention to the process rather than the result.

Have you ever seen a boy blow up a bladder? It has not grown—it is puffed up. It has become big, but it is filled with wind, as a pin will demonstrate.

Now, the apostle says, that knowledge blows a man up, and makes him look big, so that he seems to himself to be large. Love is the only thing that builds him up. The one swells him out so that he appears greater than he really is. The other develops him by actual increase. The one bloats, and the other builds. The apostle's declaration is, that the mere realm of ideas, the simple sphere of knowledge, tends

to produce among men immense inflation, and a sense of importance ; while love, the essential spirit of Christ, is the thing which augments men, enlarges them, strengthens them, with foundations downward, and a superstructure upward.

But consider what theology has attempted to do, as if it were a part of Christianity. It has attempted, in the most minute manner, to unfold the whole theory of the Divine nature. It was not in the possibility of past ages to do this. Neither is it in the possibility of the present age to do it. Our knowledge of God is simply human knowledge transformed, reconstructed by the imagination and the reason. You cannot have a conception, outside of your own personal consciousness, that constitutes anything like a rational view of the divine nature. When we take into consideration how little knowledge we have respecting ourselves, we begin to feel how vague must be the notions which we have of God. We take the history of those who have lived in the world ; the philosophies which have prevailed among men ; the types of governments, of courts, and of law, which have existed in the world, which are artificial, and which are of men's weakness and not of their strength ; and out of these we have constructed our conception of the divine moral government. And this has been built up with magnitude, a marvel of minuteness, and a marvel of skill ; but the larger it is, and the more it is specialized, the more it is a sign of artificiality, and not of true knowledge.

Consider how little men have known about governing men, and how little they have known about transferring human experience or human ideas to the divine moral government. We have had in theology methods of government taught as if instituted by God which now any rational civilized society would vomit out with abhorrence. We stand still in church creeds and symbols and beliefs. How little we know of the past, and of what is to come, and yet, how vast is the amount of that which is taught, as if we knew it ! How little we know of what may be called human knowledge, and yet, how much less do we know of regulating men's lives ; of taking care of their experience ; of

enlightening their judgment ; of removing their doubts ; of inspiring their hope ; of doing all those things which are included in theology !

And that is not the worst of it. It is not merely the great error which there has been by reason of this specializing of Christian truth that is to be condemned : the capital offense of churches has consisted in turning that which is an emotion into an idea, and then teaching the world that that idea is a sacred thing. They have entirely carried out of its proper sphere the real Christianity, which is a living personal experience, and put it into a philosophical system ; and they have made that system an arbitrary and absolute judge and condemner of men.

To-day the whole Christian world is up in arms. Why ? Because members of the church live such worldly lives ? Oh no, not if they behave well in ecclesiastical matters ; not if they observe all the proper days, and pay their pew-rents, and take good care of their minister. What is it that the Christian world is up in arms about ? About forms, and ceremonies and usages.

It is, thank God, true that in the Roman Church, in the Episcopal Church, in the Presbyterian Church, in all the sects of Christendom, there are multitudes of men who, by godly lives, sweet dispositions, and simple teaching, are laboring to promote the kingdom of God. It is true that vast efforts are made by each and by all of the sects to spread abroad the historical knowledge of Christianity ; but for the most part the sects are so cumbered with the machinery of the church that the strength of its servants is wasted in taking care of the external.

The Roman Church is all astir ; but it is for the temporal possessions of the Pope ; it is for the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary ; it is for its external relations and rights in the State ; for its articles, usages, traditions, creeds, jurisdiction, offices and officers. The energy of thousands of noble brains is expended in the control of the external machinery.

The Church of England is rent in twain, and each moiety is rent again ; but the strife is not for holiness. The concern

is not that men are carnal, that pride and selfishness are the mightiest motives in human life, that love languishes, that gentleness is rare and occasional, and that the beauty of holiness is almost unknown. The force of genius, the treasures of scholarship, organized zeal, and all the resources of acute and elaborate controversy, are occupied with things absolutely external, instrumental, subsidiary. They are quarreling as in Jerusalem the Greeks and Latins quarrel over the empty tomb of Christ. The High Church mourns that it is not worthy to touch the hem of the garment of Rome. The Evangelicals, intense, acerb, narrow, make orthodoxy unlovely. The Broad Church, clinging to institutions whose absolute apostolic authority they deny, retain their place, in the hope of rationalizing Christianity, and promoting the graces of the spirit, by the force of purely intellectual ideas.

Nor, if we look within the Episcopal Church in America are matters mended. The organization is divided against itself. It is doubtful whether more life-force is not expended in the maintenance of the external institutions of the church than in the development of Christian grace in the souls of men. It expends a vast amount of zeal in demarking itself from every other sect ; in ranging and ranking its ministry ; in binding them to minute and particular observances ; in establishing ecclesiastical uniformity. Routine it calls order, and repetition, uniformity. The most glorious of all gifts of God to men, the living force of heart liberty, the spontaneous overflow of personal experience, is little trusted, but much suspected and feared.

How is it in the Presbyterian Church ? Ask Professor Swing, who is on trial for some petty variation in doctrine. Ask Mr. Craig of Chicago, who is on trial in California, I believe, where I think his Presbytery is, on account of some looseness of view about inspiration ? How is it in regard to our brother Hyatt Smith, who is on trial before his Baptist brethren on account of communion and the necessity of baptism by immersion to membership ? And on what ground are they arraigned ? On the ground of want of faith ? of lack of love ? of being destitute of meekness and gentleness ? No, no !

People have ideas which are peculiar to themselves or to the class to which they belong ; and they organize themselves about these ideas as forces of Christianity, and convert them into a system, and make them despotic, and attempt to govern the world with them as with a rod of iron ; and is it at all strange that Christianity has lingered, that it has been perverted, and that it has been carried away into Babylon ?

Christianity does not lie in philosophical speculation : and subtle niceties. It was in the God-life in Jesus Christ that the power of Christianity lay, in former times; and it is in living human holiness that it still lies.

This leads me, fourthly, to the next consideration—namely, that the spread of the Gospel has been hindered because organic Christianity has been put in the place of personal Christianity. It has been thought necessary, in order to save the life of Christianity in the world, that churches should be organized. Well, my dearly beloved Christian brethren, I too believe that churches should be organized. Not only that, I believe that they *will* be organized. If all the force that is now exerted to organize them were exerted against their being formed, they would be organized nevertheless ;—not because Christ said they must be founded, but because God made men as he did. Organization springs out of the inherent necessities of men. It is natural that those who are seeking a common end should seek it by common help through the social element. Art organizes itself ; education organizes itself; philosophy organizes itself; commerce organizes itself; industries of every kind—mining, smelting, manufacturing, and what not—organize themselves. We need no laws, we need no divine authority, we need no legislation of any sort, to make men unite in organizations for the purpose of accomplishing the various objects of life. They do it of themselves. It is necessary and inevitable.

Since, then, all society is organized, and is developing its life and its resources through organizations, since the principle of organization is the necessary, indispensable element, by which the ordinary affairs of men are inevitably and always carried on, why such a pother about the organization of the church, as though that were an exception to everything

else in creation? It is inevitable in the nature of things that churches will organize themselves. The sunlight draws up trees into infinite branches, each one seeking the shape inherent in itself. If Congress should interfere, and appoint the shapes proper, and send men forth to clip and prune, that all the various forests should come to uniformity, the pine, the spruce, the oak, the beech, the birch, the ash, all be forced into one shape and habit, it would be scarcely more wide of nature and truth than the efforts of men to derive from the apostles a definite system of church organization, and to attempt to persuade or coerce all Christians into pre-composed forms and governments. Moral Life Force will develop a body to suit itself!

But what comes to pass? What has come to pass? This: that instead of the grandeur of the kingdom of God in the individual, instead of the power of sweetness and beauty which comes from the disclosure of a Christ-like life in each particular person, there has been an artificial organic body. And when Christianity is preached, people look at churches, and not at individuals; or, they look at individuals as members of churches. The moment a man is taught that he should live a Christ-like life, he begins to think whether or not he is fit to join a church. Reverence for churches, for organizations, has almost destroyed the living force of individualism. Individuals are grander than churches. Churches are only jewel-cases; men are the jewels.

My idea of a true church organization is this: that it is a union in which every man is joined to his fellow-men by elective affinity, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and by the social influence of like souls. Every man is to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These are the elements around about which the church is to be built up; and where these are the center of the church, the outward form will take care of itself.

Now, persons say to me, "If you hold more liberal views than those who belong to the old Puritan Congregational churches, why do not you go out of them?" Because I have a right to stay in. It is more important that there

should be liberty *in* the churches than that men should seek liberty by abandoning their birth-right. A man is in the Presbyterian Church, and is preaching Christ, and love, and self-sacrifice, and industry, and purity, and heavenlikeness ; but then, he is preaching them without an absolute belief in the endlessness of punishment ; and people say to him, “ Why do you not join the Universalist Church ? ” In other words, the power of the Spirit of God in the souls of men is not considered as enough to make one orthodox. The interior life of a man is regarded as inferior to organization, and to schedules of doctrine. But the true conception of a church organization is one in which men shall be like Christ, and in which, being like Christ, they shall be free—free to think, free to speak, and free to act.

It is a thousand times more important that young Mr. Tyng should stand in the pulpit of the Episcopal Church and preach the truths of Christ as he feels that he is divinely ordained to preach them, than that he should renounce his fellowship with that church because he does not feel called upon to submit to all of its restrictions. It is infinitely better that he should stand in that church until he has demonstrated that it permits the liberty which he claims, than that he should go out of it and found a new sect. It is better that men in the Presbyterian Church who hold a different and a larger view than is held by that church itself should stay where they are, and prove that the Gospel of Christ grants the freedom which they assert their right to exercise, than that they should form a little pocket sect some where else. Sects are good in their place ; but what we need is not so much more sects as that the sects which we have should be more Christian, and that those who are in them should utter the truth, and stand up for it, and suffer for it, and earn the right to be called Christians. What we need is more sects in which a man shall have the right to think as God inspires him to think, and to speak as God moves him to speak. Such rights are things not to be bartered or thrown away. But they are withheld by the church. The church has superseded Christ. The Christ-spirit is sucked up in creeds ; and it is to be wrested back again.

The men, however, who seek to bring about the change are not to do it by leaving the organizations to which they belong. And I stay in the Congregational communion, not alone because it is the church of my fathers, and because I reverence it; not alone because I think it is the simplest and the nearest Christian in its organization: I stay in it, among other reasons, because many men say that a minister in the Congregational Church shall not have liberty to do that which the spirit of God inspires him to do,—and I say he *shall!* Envious or low-thoughted men may say that such things indicate policy. Yes, they do; everything that is wise is politic; and I assert for my kind the right to receive God's inspiration in living free souls. I assert in behalf of the liberty of Christ's people, that no church on earth has a right to coerce them, to domineer over them, or to cast them out because they will not speak shibboleth as that church speaks it. In Christ, men are free; and I stand on the declaration of the apostle, who says, “The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: *against such there is no law.*” They stand in their own divinely inspired liberty, above law, not because they are without law, but because they are doing that which the law requires from a higher ground than that on which men ordinarily stand—from spontaneity, and not from coercion.

A church must be organized so as not only to permit the action of personal liberty, but even to inspire it. It has no inherent rights superior to the rights of the Fruits of the Spirit. The necessities of externality are not to domineer over the living force of men whom Christ has made free by the inspiration of love. Orthodox or heterodox, anger and bitterness and pride are wrong. The inspiration of love, heterodox or orthodox, is always right. Expel the malign, the mechanical, the deadening routine, with orderly cant and decent stupidity. But let light shine. Give place to personal inspiration. Let the sweet graces have liberty. He whose orthodoxy inspires bitterness should be disciplined. He whose heterodoxy inspires love, meekness, goodness, faith, joy, longsuffering, should be exalted.

I have but one other view which I will now urge. Christianity has failed to make as rapid progress as it should have made, because the character of the Lord Jesus Christ has been hidden, and because a corrupted theology has presented to us a God that will never subdue the world, and that never ought to subdue it. If there be any truth in the mission of Jesus, who came to deliver us from our sins ; if there be any truth in the compassion and suffering of Christ ; if there be any truth in that whole wondrous history, in which, "being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man ; and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," then, indeed, we have a description of God. He is a Being clothed with infinite power, who uses himself for the succor of the weak, of the ignorant, and of the sinful. He is that Principle of inspiration in the Universe that lifts men up from animal conditions, and waits patiently for them till they are brought into higher and divine relations. That is the conception of God in Christ Jesus. Christ has no meaning if that is not it.

Now, if you present to me a God sitting back of eternal forces, creating millions of men for victims, and who is going on in endless succession creating them only that, as he turns the world over, they may roll into everlasting perdition, I am repelled from it by every quality which the Gospel inspires and develops. Go, with all necromantic arts, and cull your simples for conjuration in the shadowy realms below, where sin, and wrong, and hideous cruelties, and detestable iniquities have swarmed, and bring them up from thence, and out of these form a conception of a regnant being fit to rule in hell ; now tell me, wherein does that portraiture differ from the portraiture which men have often made of Jehovah ? They have made an infernal portraiture, and they call it God ! I take every tear-drop that was shed in Gethsemane to rub out the infamous falsehood ! I take every drop of blood that flowed on Calvary, and with that I would make the heavens glow as clouds do when storms are pierced and driven by the con-

quering sun ; blood, not as the emblem of cruelty, but as the emblem of mercy. Do not preach to me a God who hates the world, and treads it under foot, and treats it as if he were a hideous tyrant, making his own pleasure and glory such that they can be augmented by the aimless sufferings of myriads of men ; do not preach to me such an abominable devil, reveling in cruelty, and call it God : preach to me a Being that made himself of no reputation, who suffered for men, and walked the earth with his arms about them, and with his heart beating against their hearts, in order that he might show them what God was, and how God felt.

As, after a long day of storm, the sun in the west breaks forth, and all trees rejoice, hung with gems, while the storm itself, moaning and murmuring, dies away in the mountains ; so, when the night of heathenism and the storm which ascetic theology has caused shall have passed away, then bring forth the new vision of God—that ought not to be new after two thousand years—Jesus Christ, whose power was in love, and joy, and peace, and whose disciples are to be known by love, and joy, and peace, and longsuffering, and gentleness, and goodness, and faith, and meekness, and temperance ; and let Him reign ! Then the sun shall stand in the firmament for a thousand years, and the kingdom of heaven and the kingdom of earth shall be one, and he shall rule everywhere, from the rising of the sun until the going down of the same !

Depart, cruelty, and come, mercy ! Go down, hideous despotism : rise up, sweet liberty and love in Jesus Christ ! Come, Thou that once wert crowned with thorns ; let the stars shine from around thy brow ; and all our hearts shall be joined to thee. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

AWAKEN in us, our Father, some sense of those mercies which, unasked, are descending upon us. It is not because of their supplication that the flowers receive thy dews by night and thy sun by day. They know not, and they come into being only after all these influences. And thou art beforehand with us. It is thy grace that makes us think of grace. It is thy fore-running blessings that quicken in us a desire for blessings. If we long to escape from fault and sin it is thy work that hath in part been accomplished in us which breeds the desire. And so thou art evermore seeking us; and when we lift up our voices to thee, they are but the echo, the response in us, to thy call. So we rejoice while we supplicate, believing that our prayers are answered in that they are made, and that the answer of prayer is often the very desire of prayer.

We rejoice in thee. We rejoice in the consciousness of thy nearness to us. We cannot understand thy greatness. We are at a loss in our understanding and in our imagination concerning thee. We cannot comprehend thy goodness, it so conflicts with the mixed pride and selfishness of our natures, struggling with generosity and with love. We are ourselves so poor in goodness that the royalty of thy nature, the sovereignty of thy love, we cannot fathom. We are more puzzled with this than we are with the infiniteness of thy nature—with thy thought-power and thy hand-power.

We rejoice, O Lord, that thou art interpreting thyself to us, little by little, out of ourselves, and that that goodness which is the fruit of the Spirit in us is, little by little, forming in us some type or conception of thee. But how much greater art thou than our thought of thee! How free is thy bountiful nature. How can we, as it were shut up and imprisoned in earthly shells, know of it? What do they who dwell in shells on the sea-coast, buried in the sand, know of the depth and the power of the ocean in which they live? and what do we who lie buried on the edge of the eternal and the infinite of thy realm know of the wealth and the commonwealth of God's heart? O grant that we may not be arrogant, as if we knew. May we be conscious of our immense ignorance. May we not seek curiously to interpret those yearnings of our souls which seem prophecies, and which seem to touch something, we know not what. We see dimly, as through a glass. We see where the morning sun is to arise, and where the light is to come and gather brightness. We see the glorious clouds that receive the light of the sun, but the orb we do not discern.

We pray that we may therefore stand in our conscious ignorance, and seek to know more and more of the way in which thou art to be known, by filling ourselves with the graces and the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ—with his patience; with his forbearance; with his sympathy for all men; with the protection which he granteth, by his thoughts, by his enthusiasm and by his fervor, lifting men up and inspiring them with patience and courage, and godliness of life.

So may we put on Christ. So may he dwell in us, that, being inspired to do the things which he did, and to live in the realms of

thought and feeling in which he lived, we may come by his experience to a better interpretation of his nature and requirements than we can gain from the letter. How poor is any outward representation of him! How imperfect is any mere understanding! Our life continually rubs out what our thoughts indite. We are ourselves dull and unknowing, and in darkness, because we are so low in our life; because we are so unfertile in goodness; because we are so without ingenuity in things which make for spiritual excellence. We are strong in our temper; we are strong in our will; we are strong in our physical reason; we are strong in the things which build up the visible and the outward in human life; but in all those things which belong to the great realm above, how weak we are and how imperfect! We are children without their simplicity and innocence. We are like them only in ignorance.

And now we pray, O pitying God that dost behold this great human realm where men blindly toil and strive, that thou wilt look down upon us in mercy. O thou that hast had compassion upon the world, and art having compassion upon it, lift us to that sphere of interpretation in which we may see the course of time and the fates of men with the feeling of God. We pray that we may have more of that compassion which brought thee from heaven to earth. We pray that more and more we may seek to help others rather than by our power to compel them to serve us. Grant to us something of the largeness and grandeur of that divine charity which is in Jesus Christ, but which hath been so little imitated among his followers.

We pray that thou wilt spread the spirit of love and the all-healing power of love among the people in all churches. Take away temptations to bitterness. Take away the arrogance of pride, and the domination of selfishness. Take away everything which deprives thy people of that liberty wherewith Christ makes them free. We pray that we may live together as brethren, in coöperative zeal, seeking to surpass each other in bearing, in suffering, in expending our forces for the sake of others. May we have a holy emulation in things which are like unto thee.

We pray that thou wilt raise up those to fill our places who are better able to interpret the truth of God and to exemplify the life of Christ than we have been. We look upon much of it as unworthy of thee and of ourselves. We are ashamed that our purposes have been so short-lived, and that they have been so poorly fulfilled. Having eyes we have seen not, and having ears we have not heard. We have interpreted the coarser things of nature, but the things which belong to the kingdom of God we have not known. We have followed thee afar off. We have sought thee for the loaves and fishes. We have been unworthy of the name of disciples, of pupils, or of children. Lord, thou hast had a slothful, self-indulgent household, hard to bear. We have been fractious, disobedient, unloving and unlovely. How few claspings and how many buffets hast thou had from our hands! How little have we followed thee in the day of desolation and abandonment, and how have we crowded about thee in the day of triumph! We have come in at the eastern gate, shouting Hosanna! and we have let thee go out at the western gate amid cries of, Crucify

him! abiding in our places and refusing to bear with Christ, or to go with him.

We pray that thou wilt temper our arrogance by our consciousness of our ill-desert, and of our relationships to thee. We pray that thou wilt grant that the measures which belong to immortality, to the other and endless life, may be substituted for those measures which spring from time and the realm of the world. We beseech of thee that thus we may be imbued with celestial wisdom, and walk with the spirit of the upper life.

Grant, we pray thee, thy blessing to rest on the families of this congregation. Be with any one of them in which is sickness. If any of them are in troubles, bereavements, bitter sorrows, be with them to comfort, and, by the power of the Holy Ghost, to interpret the meaning of thine earthly dealings with thy people; and say to every one, "Whom I love I chasten."

We pray that to those who are bearing the heat and burden of the day amidst cares and perplexities thou wilt grant patience and manliness. May they feel themselves called to exhibit Christ in the way in which they live in human affairs. May they adorn the doctrine of the Saviour by their integrity, by their honor, by their fidelity, by their industry, and by their success.

We pray that thou wilt grant, more and more, to all our households, the spirit of heaven. More and more may the family become as the gate of heaven. We pray that thou wilt remember the little children, and all that are growing out of childhood into manhood. May there be such influences around about them that they shall come up unsoled and unstained. May they consecrate the dew of their youth and the whole strength of their manhood alike to the cause of truth, and manliness, and honor.

We pray that thou wilt pour out thy spirit upon this whole land. Bless the President of these United States, and those who are joined with him in authority. Bless the Congress assembled. We beseech of thee that the spirit of wisdom may be breathed upon them from on high. Bless the Governors of the different States. Bless all judges, all magistrates, all that are in authority.

We pray that thou wilt make the people everywhere obedient unto the Lord. Take away the distemperature of passion, of conflicts, of collisions; and grant that peace may abide everywhere.

We pray that thou wilt spread abroad intelligence in all this land. Join it with virtue and true piety. Grant that the light may shine in dark places; and that all men, from the greatest unto the least, may have the light of Christian civilization.

And we pray that thou wilt bless not us alone, but all the nations of the earth. May we feel kinship more and more strongly. May we be united in the kingdom of faith as we are in the kingdom of suffering, and in all the mischiefs that have sprung from ignorance and superstition. So may all the nations be united in hope, and in striving after a better day. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt take out of conflict the sting of bitterness, of selfishness, and of hatred; and that a true sympathy may be felt throughout the world, and that the spirit of Christ, the great Civilizer, may come and reign among

men. Let thy kingdom come, and thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit.
Amen.

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, grant, we pray thee, that we may be drawn more and more away from the conflict of the Gospel, except that which is in ourselves. More and more may we be clothed with the sweetness and fragrance of the Gospel, so that we may win, by patience and gentleness, those who are opposed to thee and to thy truth. Give us more of that knowledge which comes from being like thee. Fill us with all the blessings of God. And we pray that so we may be joined to thee. And may we find others that are of the same mind; and associating ourselves with them, may we be assemblies, congregations, or churches bound together, not by outward bonds, not by man-made policies and laws, which are things of time and earth, gross and sensuous, and full of quarrelings and contentions, leading to all manner of suffering, but by the sweet fellowship of the inward life, wherein joy sings to joy, and peace breathes upon peace. As in the garden are flowers which send forth sweet fragrance; so, as flowers in the garden of the Lord, may we shed sweetness on every side of us. May we bear the fruits of righteousness. May a fellowship of love and sympathy spring up among all thy people. And so may heaven be among men. Hear us, and answer us, through Christ our Redeemer.
Amen.

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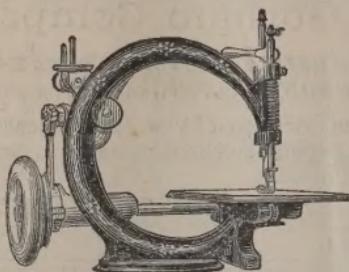
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